

**Testimony for Sidney Wastewater, Capitol, Room 317B** 1/16/2014

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As with Bainville, I had advised Sidney's mayor and DPW that their time might better be served in-Town where there is so much going on. Due to distance, the short time available for testimony, and noting that they are recommended for funding, I felt the committee would understand and appreciate their position.

Sidney is under an Administrative Order on Consent. This order is actually an amicable agreement between the State of Montana and the City to provide needed improvements to its wastewater system in order to protect the Yellowstone River. The City's old system included a single, very large lagoon cell and a second cell where the wastewater percolated to the groundwater and passed into to the Yellowstone. Due to heavy organic loading and illegal dumping, the City's lagoon system effectively "died" in 2012. That is to say that the entire 39-acre pond was completely anaerobic, or septic, even in the top few inches of water in contact with air and wind.

The proposed project will serve to protect the Yellowstone River from what is now essentially untreated wastewater entering the River via groundwater. The solution uses old and proven technology (aeration), avoiding the very high operations costs associated with an activated sludge system. In addition, the discharge to large sand beds takes advantage of natural treatment of ammonia, which is extremely toxic to fish. Ammonia that makes it through the aeration process will be nitrified by ever-present bacteria in the sandy soils in the same manner that ammonium nitrate or urea is converted to nitrate very quickly whenever those fertilizers are applied to fields.

**The proposed use of funds is for the second phase of the \$16 million** wastewater project. The City has sharply increased user rates and for several years has collected impact fees from developers. Although \$125,000 may not sound like much in such a



**Sidney Lagoons Phase 1 Nearing Completion**

large project, every dollar is deeply appreciated by the City. The City has been working on this project for over 2 ½ years and obtained a discharge permit and approval for the proposed solution. Phase 1 is nearly complete and Phase 2 is being designed. No State or federal funds have been used to date.